

Borowicz, Ryszard

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Ryszard BOROWICZ
Research Station Institute of Rural
and Agricultural Development,
Polish Academy of Sciences, Toruń

EGALITARIANISM IN EDUCATION - IDEAS, PRINCIPLES AND FEATURES

In a discussion on egalitarianism, three different analysis levels are discernible: pertaining to the idea - how it can be; principles organizing the social system - how it should be; and finally features of the system - how it is. It is, however, impossible to arrange these approaches in a chronological order, because in the history of civilization they are intertwined and occur together. It is relatively easy to show the most general continuity - opposition to human harm - and variability, i.e. content differentiation - in time and social space. It is agreed that we deal with a universal, allhuman value, but the fact of total arbitrary modification - propitiated by equivocality of the term, immense emotional load and numerous associations - is intolerable.

1. Egalitarian ideas

It seems pointless to argue when and where egalitarianism was first discussed. Available sources show that some currents, approaches and definitions had been formed in antiquity. One of those trends, well developed not only on the idea level but also on the system-organizing principles level, spoke about equality of the "satiated man" (e.g. Aristotle). On the other hand, the radical or plebeian trend referred to equality of all people, to the "hungry man" (Plato, stoics). This motif is later found in Chris-

tian concepts. The radical egalitarian current clearly manifested itself in concepts and activities of early Utopians (T. Morus, G. Winstanley, T. Campanella) and in pre-Marxist socialist doctrines (e.g. C. H. Saint-Simon, Ch. Fourier, R. Owen).

In both trends, which had been the root of both bourgeois and modern communist ideology, we find a whole range of egalitarian ideas. For some of them, the individual's interest prevails, others favor selected social groups or entire societies, still others - interests of the state. The focus is first on formal equality of chances, then real equality of conditions: political equality was contrasted with the economic sphere; the human life-span was highlighted or transcended the world. Egalitarianism served to strengthen and legitimize the rulers, and the ruled to abolish existing social order. K. Marx and F. Engels drew on that maze of ideas and doctrines about equality. None of them, however, left a complete, coherent lesson on the subject, not to mention even a theoretical outline. In a number of scattered remarks they reserved themselves to present ends to reach, avoiding the necessary means. They spoke merely about a process, about driving towards equality. However, in their case, as with W. I. Lenin we should be able to differentiate the early concepts in their writings (Economic-philosophical Manuscripts, Holy Family, German Ideology) from ideas articulated later (e.g. Capital). The object of their scientific discussions was capitalist society whose relations were the basis of perspectivistic thinking. For Marx the historic necessity was to nationalize property and intensify labor development. In *The Critique of Gothan program*, he draws attention to the idea that the formula "everybody according to his work" fitting bourgeois legislation must be understood as equal pay for equal work. The factor governing this principle is equally applied, however, to unequal individuals. Only "at a higher stage of communism, when the enslaving subordination of humans to work distribution disappears as does opposition of physical to intellectual work; when work has become not only the source of subsistence but also the most important necessity of human life; when

along with versatile development of individuals labor intensity has increased and all sources of resources have been joined to abundance - the narrow horizon of bourgeois law will be passed. The society will then be able to declare on their banner everybody according to his ability, everybody according to his needs!"¹ Marxist equality ideal accepts as a sole measure the individual's needs, their variety and their full satisfaction.

Engels followed a similar course. Growing social awareness leads to the point where "real content of the proletariat's postulate of equality is the demand to abolish classes"². In that consists the character of egalitarian struggle comprising not only the nature of law but also the social and economic spheres. As distinctly as Marx, he denounced egalitarianism viewed as identity of particular individuals.

This term was also cautiously used by Lenin, who did not revise general assertions made by his predecessors but rather continued and supplemented them. In his works he clearly and consistently distinguished between equality of chances - anybody sufficiently motivated has equal opportunity to try to obtain a certain value (good) which does not obviously mean to obtain it - moderate egalitarianism (formal kind of equality) - and equality of conditions - efforts to level discrepancies in social positions, living standards and conditions of life - radical equalization. His views on social equality problem changed gradually as theoretical assumptions turned to practical implementation of these ideas. Even in his work written in 1917 *State and Revolution* he was an extreme egalitarianist, while in the program article *The Nearest Years of Soviet Power* he corrected his position exactly under the pressure of reality. The fundamental direction of changes was to run from compulsion ("dictatorship of the proletariat") to egalitarianism.

¹ K. M a r x, *Krytyka programu gotajskiego*, Warszawa 1961, p. 15.

² F. E n g e l s, *Anty-Dühring*, Warszawa 1956, p. 120.

Two more motifs related to equality in Marx's, Engels and especially Lenin's deliberations are worth exposing: distinction between various points of reference. One of them is structural in character - concerning production relationships and ownership of production means - and seeks the sources in class and economic type of society: the other is of a distributive character, distribution of basic commodities, satisfaction of needs, accessibility to posts, participation principles for individuals and entire social groups in governing processes - it concentrates on improving and correcting distribution mechanisms. Another motif concerns different possibilities of functioning of the categories in question under the conditions of a society of plenty and relative goods limitation: these problems should be seen in yet a different way in post-industrial societies (technological advancement and global economic growth as the main stimulators to egalitarianism). The important element of the Marxist equality concept is understanding that the system most completely expressing man cannot be based on subordination of an individual to society (assumption: in communism an individual's interest and society's interest are congruent).

In Poland, those views have been frequently reconstructed, interpreted³ and applied to define current situation and strategy of further development⁴. However, egalitarianism itself both in theoretical and empirical aspects has not been - contrary to appearances - systematically explored. One should rather speak of several waves of increased interest, though it is one of the most important ideas constituting present socialist societies.

³ G. Temikin, *Karola Marksa obraz gospodarki komunistycznej*, Warszawa 1962; E. Żyro, *Pojęcie sprawiedliwości u Karola Marksa*, Warszawa 1966; J. Malanowski, *Zasada równości społecznej w ustroju socjalistycznym w pracach Lenina*, *Studia Socjologiczne*, 1970, No 4; G. Kruczkowska, *Egalitaryzm a płace*, Warszawa 1979.

⁴ M. Fritzhand, *Marxizm a idea równości*, *Nowe Drogi*, 1974, No 3; E. Kostowska, *Pojęcie równości w myśli marksistowskiej i mieszczańskiej (różnice i analogie)*, *Studia Socjologiczne*, 1974, No 2; S. Dziamski, *Równość i sprawiedliwość w marksistowskiej myśli społeczno-politycznej w Polsce*, *Ideologia i Polityka*, 1979, No 11.

In Western social philosophy the subject enjoys unflinching interest. It is rooted back in liberal equality concepts sanctioning free competitive economic mechanisms and it focuses chiefly on society-related inequalities which it regards in distributive aspect⁵. The result of a distributive aspect in analysis of inequalities of different character - social, material, cultural (mainly wage, income and prestige related problems are raised) - is shifting to the background of social relations and labor intensity, which preconditioned adequateness of one kind of distribution over another.

A multitude of various motifs and ideas on equality requires several possibilities to be considered when we analyse this category from the angle of education. A search for objective criteria and standards leads to the belief that the basic classification should run the line: individual equality - social equality.

In the first case considered, one may refer to at least two, different conceptions. Ideological foundation is utopian socialism, the motto "to each the same". This, however would call for the assumption to be made that individuals are identical in intellectual capacity or, more precisely and broadly - education. The basic criticism consists in the necessity to distinguish between equality and identity. With an eye to unquestionable genetic and anatomical diversity of human individuals - intelligence level, perseverance, temperament, health etc. - and diversified needs of society - educational background, profession, innate leadership skills and others - to accept such an idea of individual equality in education has no rational premises. Another concept of individual equality relates to Marx and Lenin - "everybody according to his abilities, everybody according to his needs". It is more realistic to adopt it as a reference point in studies on education. We turn here to abilities of both an individual and people. Analysis of educational reality in this conven-

⁵ See e.g. A. Schutz, S. J. Benn, J. Plamenatz - works included in the book *Aspects of Human Equality*, New York 1956; R. Dahrendorf, *On the Origin of Social Inequality*, *in: Philosophy, Politics and Society*, ed. P. Laslett, W. G. Runciman, Oxford 1967; F. Parkin, *Class Inequality and Political Order*, London 1971; L. Kriesberg, *Social Inequality*, New Jersey 1979.

tion is possible only when one fundamental provision is made: equal situations must be met, that is social, educational and socializing environments must be similar. Without meeting that condition - when children and youth do not have similar opportunities to develop their abilities and desires - it is difficult to propose solutions of that kind. For those - quite different - reasons, I reject both concepts related to individual equality.

Therefore, another possibility of viewing the equality problem should be considered, that is social relation category. It is based on the premise that the distribution of gifted individuals with certain intellectual predispositions is normal, that is it follows a bell-shaped curve. In education it is manifested in such a way that following upward school levels the number of individuals with potential abilities decreases. The second premise is that within particular classes, social layers, large groups and local communities, the distribution pattern of this potential is similar, i.e. directly proportional to their proportion in global society⁶. The subject of research is then broadly understood as access to education, and the reference point is absolute equality or, in other words, a social situation whereby some groups do not profit from this good at the expense of others. Apart from arguments of social nature, such an approach is validated by economic and political considerations. This definition may be applied to education in various ways. Various paths of thinking may be pursued, various solutions found. Firstly, an equal measure may be sought. An example would be equality of opportunities or equal departure, assuming a similar departure level followed by competition - moderate egalitarianism. Secondly, an equal situation may be accepted as a starting premise. The best example of this may be equality of conditions, already mentioned earlier, in which young people live and learn - radical equation. There

⁶ This reasoning has its opponents: racial anthropological theories, circulation of élites, élites of power.

naturally arises the question of what situation and conditions should be taken into account from the point of view of equality in education.

The different conceptual approach to social equality in education consist in distinguishing children's starting levels at school (e.g. school maturity - socially diversified preparation to begin learning at the first grade of elementary school) from learning conditions (effort put into education - daily commuting, expenses on education charging individual budgets, etc.) and from education results (achieving similar results in stratificational and environmental context especially at the level that appears common and solid and in monomial schools).

Each of the above presented ways of understanding equality in educating institutions - intraschool equality - designates a different thing. When we talk about equal departure we mean similar initial conditions during childhood that enable honest competition and take-off for the best. In equal learning conditions, we are interested in maintaining similar socializing and material base throughout the entire period of education so that the sole factor in achievements is the human one (his intelligence and personality). When we concentrate upon equal effects we leave starting condition and take similar final achievements into focus, instead.

The social equality problem in education may be analysed in yet a different convention, consisting in distinction between potential phenomena and processes - equality of chances - on the one hand and existing or past conditions - equality of participation on the other. When we talk about chances we mean primarily equal access to active and honest competition with comparable partners learning institutions. Equal participation, however, is the result of complex social processes and shows the distribution of the value of education.

It should be remembered here that each of the above presented proposals is complementary to the formula of absolute equality. They are mutually inseparable and they do not cover the entire field of education. Apart from interest, there still re-

main teacher-student interactions and the question of equal attitude towards youth in classrooms. The root for such a decision is the necessity to demarcate the line between differences and inequalities. For a sociologist the subjects of interest are the inequalities stemming from such social relations and structures that are objectively unjustifiable or socially unacceptable. The phenomena proving generation-to-generation inheritance are of key-importance to discussions about education.

In Western scientific literature, meritocratic orientation is strongly emphasized. The concept of inequality in the system of education has been most thoroughly presented by R. Boudon⁷.

2. Egalitarian principles

One of the important differences between social ideas and principles is connected with degree of universality. Ideas are more universal and go beyond a given time span and social space. On the other hand, principles in their definite majority are valid only in a definite social-political system, in a certain historical dimension. Let us turn to the American Declaration of Independence or the French Declaration of Rights of Man. Those 18th. Century documents both emphasise formal, legal equality of opportunities (e.g. accessibility to positions) but unequal distribution of advantages and talents (innate abilities) and consequently, unequal distribution of accomplishments and rewards. In the years to follow, basic contents concerning equality remained unaltered though in subsequent legislative documents they were precised and subordinated to definite goals. The principle of legal equality functions to the present day: formal - as Marxist say, or democratic - as bourgeois scholars call it. It finds its sources in liberal social ideas (the thesis of natural equality

⁷ R. Boudon, Education, Opportunity and Social Inequality, New York 1974; Ch. Jenks, Education and Equality, [in:] Modern Society, ed. P. Worsley, New York 1978; Ch. J. Hurn, The Limits and Possibilities of Schooling. An Introduction to the Sociology of Education, Boston 1978.

of people - free competition) and meritocratic ideas (an individual's merits - rewards granted).

Quite different were the efforts to move from egalitarian ideas to principles (constitutional and legal solutions) and the molding of social reality during the revolution in Russia. Original slogans (Power to the Soviets, Land to peasants, Peace) underwent decisive re-evaluation. Making use of the notion dictatorship of proletariat - the proletariat takes power and uses it to accomplish its own class interests - interests of all other classes and groups were subordinated to the interests of the ruling class. This happened in economic, political as well as ideological spheres. The superior goal towards which this kind of solutions were implemented was the declared intention of social change that would lead to a classless society. It was only in the communist society - which appears as a certain vision without unequivocally defined contents and especially without precise intermediate stages leading to that end and temporal dimension - that definite steps outside the formal equality formula would be made and real social equality attained; individual equality and freedom to satisfy needs according to the formula "to everyone according to his needs".

The rights and duties of citizens were defined in the period between the world wars in the Constitution of the Polish Republic of March 1921. Aside from its bourgeois-democratic character, the Constitution granted a wide range of fundamental rights and freedoms to individuals. Equality to the law concerns nationality, religion and sex. The factual range of people's equality right was limited by another Constitution declared in April 1935, the limitations comprising freedom to assemble and form coalitions and electoral rights. The Constitution as a whole was aimed at strengthening central state power and included authoritarian elements.

The years of Nazi occupation - the fight against an external enemy - are a tragic but also peculiar period. Internal differences on social-political issues lost much of their import. Social life became subjected to utterly different, externally imposed

and, at the same time, more or less disrespected laws. The state of shock society was in at the end of the war and the new social-political order aided rapid and determined formulation of new principles organizing the social system. The Manifest of July 22, 1944 proclaimed: "The Polish National Liberation Committee embarking on reconstruction of Poland's statehood, solemnly declares restoration of all democratic freedoms, equality of all citizens regardless of race, religion and nationality, freedom of political, and trade organizations and freedom of press and conscience"⁸.

The Constitution of the Polish People's Republic of 1952 brought in new issues and defined a number of others. Along with traditionally proclaimed norms, it included declarations of intentions. In the first chapter, devoted to the state's political system, we find basic directions: implementation of social justice principles, abolishment of man's exploitation by other men, counteraction of violations of social norms, permanent improvement of welfare and obliteration of differences between city and village and manual and intellectual work.

Decisions made by the Polish United Workers Party have great - if not decisive - significance in shaping principles organizing the social system in People's Poland. A valid conception of democratic centralism makes one turn attention to the activities of top bodies of the party. For many reasons, it cannot be carried out by researchers, hence the limitation to final and official documents. Analysis of documents issued by consecutive party congresses - Committee reports and declarations - made by E. Kostowska permitted a number of interesting conclusions about social equality. The issue of egalitarianism considered from the viewpoint of "to everyone according to his work" was a fixture at all the party congresses in the years 1954-1981. This system of reference was brought out mainly when the issues of salary, wages and commodity distribution were raised.

⁸ Supplement to Diary of Acts of 1944 No 1, Manifest of Polish National Liberation Committee.

On some occasions the need to level the differences was stressed (2nd and 3rd Congress). On another occasion the urge to differentiate individual work, qualifications or responsibility (5th and 6th) was evident, and levelling the differences that were socially unacceptable was recommended (8th). E. Kostowska states: "none of the congresses offer, a clear program as to how inequalities in various spheres of life should be removed [...], references to social inequality being focused on inequality of conditions (participation) and inequality viewed as inequivalency"⁹.

One of the important principles is the constitutional right to education, which is the basis for defining educational authority and obligation for society and state. Analysing this right in egalitarian aspect, we should pay attention to the formation of political conception as the foundation for the formulation of principles organizing the social system (state and party documents) and also legal regulations (legislative acts proper). It is difficult to discuss both these cases in a static approach, because they evolve not only in regard to the type of social-political system. A number of legal-organizing documents of the second Republic are proof of that. Education legislation during those years made a turn from attempts at egalitarization (Decree issued by Head of State in February 1919) to egalitarization of the system (Education System Act of 1934).

Education issues are entered already in the first document of the new state authority: "One of the most urgent goals for the National Liberation Committee is to restore education on liberated land and ensure free education at all levels. Compulsory elementary education will be strictly respected. Polish intelligentsia, decimated by Germans, and especially men of sciences and arts will be specially protected. Reconstruction of schools will begin immediately".

Meanwhile, discussions on new educational system concept continued. Education authorities were designing a fundamental or-

⁹ E. Kostowska, *Idea równości społecznej*, Warszawa 1983, p. 173.

ganization and program reform. An important event was the Congress of Education, which discussed its premises, Democratization of education was to be served by four other principles: education would be common, free, public and uniform. The final resolution of the congress in Łódź included an opinion about the necessity to introduce compulsory and uniform 8-year (8-grade) schools in the city and country. The visions outlined in June 1945 were for many years to come gradually materialized. The same year saw a decree issued by the Minister of Education that introduced uniform elementary school programs, and only in 1966 did an 8-grade elementary school become the foundation of the entire educational system.

That was also the period when many legal acts regulating the issues of interest to us were published. First of all the July 1952 Constitution ought to be mentioned. Among the rights of citizens of the Polish People's Republic there is the right to education. There followed in 1956 The Decree on "School Duty". A broader interpretation of the right to education was introduced only in the July 1961 Act on Education System Development: "Development of the system of education ensures every citizen to receive elementary education, and makes available to him all levels and directions of education depending on his interests and abilities"¹⁰. Certainly, the principle of egalitarianism applies to elementary education - "ensures every citizen to receive". As to the following higher levels of education it is of key importance to understand availability. Two different types of axiological assumptions have all the time been colliding. One is the egalitarian tendency preferring the possibility of socially equal education at the non compulsory level. The other gives priority to the rational-utilitarian principle. Such a political-legal system of secondary and higher levels of education meets the social demand for qualified professionals. The only selection factors are motivation, intelligence and assiduity of an individual who makes

¹⁰ Diary of Acts of 1961, No 32 p. 160 - preamble to July 15 Act.

use of abilities and opportunities from elementary school equality. The importance of individual interests and abilities would find support in the idea presented earlier "from everybody according to his abilities".

One of the most important equality-wise operations by educational authorities was reorganization of the rural school network through implementation of community collective schools. This however, from the point of view of equality principles, failed to live up to expectations. Another egalitarian attempt was made by the Sejm - Polish Parliament - in the law passed in October 1973, On National Educational System. The main part of the system was the 10-year general education school with the same program in the city and the country. That, primed with preschool education and general implementation, would give youth uniform and modern education.

Analysis of the evolution of basic formal-legal acts proves that the equality notion is rarely used. Examples include the 1961 Act describing education objectives and the 1973 School Democratization Act, which granted wide access of worker and peasant youth to all levels in the preamble. However, an evaluation formulated solely on such a criterion would be incomplete and unjust. I have purposely concentrated on primary school because I believe that at this level the struggle continues to move from social ideas through system organizing principles to functioning in social reality. Equality can be accomplished through other principles: compulsory, common, uniform - in terms of program and organization - and free education systematically maintained in general issues and at the same time developed and supplemented in particular issues throughout all relevant documents also contain other issues pursuing the same directions: reduction of differences between rural and urban schools or wider accessibility of secondary and higher education to youth of worker and peasant background. This gives us reason to claim that social equality in education has become a permanently declared principle of the system. However, it is only through further analysis based on quite different sources that the answer

to the question - are these the features also of our educational system? - will be obtained.

An important initiative on the part of the Party in the field of education was the appointment of the Experts Committee that compiled the "Report on Education in Polish People's Republic" following the resolution of Political Bureau. I think we should refer to it not only when the educational system or suggestions for modifications or perspective changes are analyzed (resting unused to the present day) but also when we speak about the basic principles organizing that system. The report presents the main formal-legal premises of modern education. Principles of equality were loudly invoked in the August of 1980. Post-August educational postulates and initiatives were put forth by many social circles, the subjects being trade unions, students, social associations. Today, when the economy has collapsed and deep social-political crisis is evident, we should not only return to the equality issue as an important social idea, but we should take efforts to express it in the form of social principles that would set up formal-legal foundations to help the idea function in reality.

3. Features of the Educational System

We encounter the equality issue mainly in social ideology and doctrines. However, when we move to description and evaluation of reality, we operate as a rule with the category of social inequality, attempting to define the discrepancy between fact and desirable or ideal conditions. Social, economic and legal sciences relatively seldom deal with that issue. We can merely speak of waves of increased interest in the problem throughout the period of People's Poland. The beginnings lie with sociological empirical studies undertaken by A. Malewski, S. Nowicka and A. Sarapata in the late '50s. The next wave of discussions about what is and what is not egalitarianism in Polish society came with the Conference in Tard in 1967. Another in-

crease of the number of empirical studies is found in the 70s (e.g. J. Malanowski). After 1980, there appeared a number of autonomic works that were not restricted to diagnostic plane but also took up theoretical and methodological motifs and aspired to synthetic and comparative aims¹¹. At the same time, there appeared articles in scientific journals written by M. Gadomska, A. Gołaszewski, P. Sztompka, W. Zaborowski.

A study devoted to dynamics of perception of inequality during 1960-1980 carried out by J. Koralewicz-Zębik indicates a clear tendency in transforming social awareness. In the early '60s the opinion prevailed that differences between people of various social groups were smaller than before World War II and anticipation of them diminishing was nearly universal - the variant of hope. However, since the mid-'70s the differences were perceived as great with a tendency to increase - the variant of failed hopes prevails¹².

Are we coping with a similar continuity of penetration and awareness on the part of researchers when we analyze the educational system from within? The general answer to that question must be negative. In the literature of the subject, we find two research groups that have been for 20 years penetrating continuously and systematically the issues concerning society and state (at various levels of organization) versus education. The two groups - namely the Poznań-Gdańsk group headed by S. Kowalski and the Toruń-Warsaw group represented mainly by M. Kozakiewicz, Z. Kwieciński, W. Winclawski and R. Borowicz - strongly emphasize egalitarian motifs in their works¹³.

¹¹ Zróznicowanie społeczne w perspektywie porównawczej, /ed./ K. M. Słomczyński, W. Wesółowski, Wrocław 1981; Społeczeństwo polskie w drugiej połowie lat siedemdziesiątych, ed. Z. Sufin, Warszawa 1981; Nierówności społeczne w Polsce i na Węgrzech, /coll. work ed./ T. Kolosi i E. Wnuk-Lipiński, Wrocław 1984; Społeczeństwo polskie czasu kryzysu, coll. work ed. S. Nowak, Warszawa 1984.

¹² J. Koralewicz-Zębik, Potoczna percepcja nierówności w Polsce w latach 1960-1980, *Studia Socjologiczne*, 1983, No 3, p. 146-147.

¹³ This is discussed in detail by T. S. Frąckowiak, *Selekcje szkolne w typowych środowiskach współczesnej Polski*, Poznań 1986.

Stanisław Kowalski, while focusing his interest on educational institutions and educational backgrounds shifting gradually from diagnostic to applied research, never lost social context from sight: "under the conditions of family inequality, the principle of selection by abilities and motivation is a fiction, because the abilities and motivations themselves are determined by these inequalities"¹⁴. The consequence of this line of thinking is linking egalitarianism of education in socialism with technological and economic progress and with social restructuring and improvement of the education system.

An example of the accomplishments of the latter research groups is the 1972 "Report on accessibility of education to youth of rural areas at various levels of schooling" prepared for the Polish Experts Committee by M. Kozakiewicz, Z. Kwieciński, W. Wincławski. Four different ways to understand and measure inequality in access to education are distinguished in this report:

- 1) inequality in participation in the number of admissions to schools of various types and levels,
- 2) inequality in the degree to which the total of potential abilities in the society is exploited,
- 3) inequality of opportunities to accomplish one's aspirations and desires,
- 4) inequality of point of departure in regard to economic, cultural and social conditions in which a child grows up, develops and learns.

In the first chapter we read: "We declare our full support to the only correct understanding of equality in the sense defined in item 4 as *equality of point of departure*". Only such equality warrants all other aspects of equality to gain the meaning suitable to socialist ideology /.../. In the present report, putting forth the equal departure issue we shall concern our-

¹⁴ S. Kowalski, *Udział socjologii w badaniach procesów wychowania*, /in:/ *Nauki przyrodnicze współdziałające z pedagogiką*, ed. B. Suchodolski, Warszawa 1966, p. 306; *Aspiracje młodzieży na tle stosunku pokoleń*, *Ruch Prawniczy Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny*, 1961, No 1.

selves with all aspects of inequality in rural youth's access to education"¹⁵.

Equality of educational opportunities was also the foundation in studies by W. Adamski and K. Zagórski or M. Jarosz¹⁶. This most recent wave of interest in egalitarianism in education, where diagnostic plane meets theoretical basis, includes studies by M. Gadomska, G. Kacprowicz, M. Kozakiewicz, M. Szymański, Z. Zaborowski and W. Wiśniewski and his group. This, however, does not exhaust the empirical possibilities in studies on egalitarianism in education. On the contrary, this current includes hundreds of published works dealing with those issues. They are concerned with, among other problems, *social preconditioning of aspirations and educational plans for children and youth - equality of opportunities?; socially conditioned differences in children's maturity to begin first grade - equality of departure?; social selection in education and availability of various educational levels - equality of participation?* The question marks are connected with boundaries that must not be trespassed when transferring these studies to the ground of theory of equality and limitations related to supplementary interpretations of their results. These reservations are enhanced further by a varying level found in the literature of the subject, where the decisive factor is not only theoretical and methodological maturity of the research disciplines concerned with the problem, but also the value of individual works. They all require a degree of cognitive distance - as do also published statistical data - and must be applied with all reservations of scientific criticism.

Quantitative approaches. Let us look at two different ways to satisfy the formula of perfect social equality. What they have in common is that they answer questions formulated similarly: how many times greater or smaller are educational opportunities,

¹⁵ M. Kozakiewicz, Z. Kwieciński, W. Winclawski, Raport o dostępie młodzieży wiejskiej do kształcenia na różnych szczeblach szkolnictwa, Warszawa 1972, p. 6-7.

or greater or smaller participation in learning institutions for youth, depending on actions by concrete social forces?

In the case of equality of educational opportunities, we concentrate on potential processes or phenomena that will either take place in the future or have not been completed yet. On this basis we can define intergenerational changes taking place in social structure. Mobility, or the difference between departure position and the position described as desirable or attainable is indicative of the degree of openness or closedness of society. The importance of level and contents (kind) of education in mobility process of individuals or entire groups in various other social dimensions is commonly acknowledged.

Let us try now to answer not so much the question how the structure of the education profession or spatial distribution of Polish society would change in an intergenerational approach, but rather the narrower-range question: to what degree, parents' educational background, allegiance to social-professional standing, place of residence at early socialization stages are reflected in educational aspirations of their children. None of the above listed indexes describing family background is autonomic - they all have the syndrome characteristic - but each of them has great diagnostic value. In Polish society this value is missing in the case of material factor (wage or income level). When comparing different generations we must bear in mind the evolution and changes that took place in social-professional structure, level of education, concentration of population. Greater availability of education is connected with a certain inflation of professional positions that earlier were placed high in the social hierarchy. Apart from that, we cope here with distinctive desynchronization of statuses.

The notion of equality of opportunities requires some explanation. So far, we have defined it rather enigmatically as "potential processes" or "aspirations". In research it is utilized mainly to designate dreams, aspirations or educational plans. What is characteristic, is the fact that despite great theoretical

awareness in regard to their meaning and separatedness when proceeding to empirical recognition of reality, those different notions are given similar designations. That is, almost identical questions are formulated in order to diagnose intentions of young people.

In a similar way, using basically the same indexes, we can consider the issue of equality of participation of youth with various features of ascribed position in educational institutions. The main line of our research will be aimed at showing the distribution of youth in schools of various level and type and the dynamics of change in these areas. Moreover, by confronting social educational aspiration with structure of students, we can judge the efficiency of the purposeful selection mechanisms.

Regardless however, of whether we operate with educational opportunity category or consider participation at educational institutions, proven rules of egalitarianism remain valid. On the one hand, as a result of ever-increasing availability of education at secondary and higher levels, education became generally more available to all youth, which was accompanied by increased social demand for education. However, the growth is not permanent and systematic: the dynamics are visible only in long term perspectives. On the other hand, when we consider Polish society at various levels of its organization we discern clear disproportions in the rate of this change. The first 15 years of People's Poland was a period of the stepwise growth of society's educational aspirations and real participation in education of rural youth with worker and peasant backgrounds. This is reflected in the egalitarianization of students' structures. In the following periods we can generally speak about growing social inequality, there being exact years of abatement or keeping the status quo. This conclusion is supported by analyses taking as reference point the situation during the second Republic or ope-

¹⁶ W. Adamski, K. Zagórski, Szanse zdobywania wykształcenia w Polsce. Raport z badań, Warszawa 1979; M. Jarosz, Nie-równość społeczne, Warszawa 1984.

rating with comparable data from various countries. Qualitative approaches. The thing in common for other ways of fulfilling perfect social equality formula is that they answer the questions: how strongly is a particular group's position varied at school, and to what degree does ascribed social position mark the achievement level?

Studies and discussions on egalitarianism in education focused mainly on higher schools. It is indeed a lens that focuses and reflects social inequalities. In time, however, there continued to grow a scientific reflexion about cause and source of this state. Therefore, first admissions to higher schools were penetrated, then there formed an opinion that the first selection threshold in education was between elementary and secondary levels. Our proposition in the discussion on equality of departure postulates the admission to elementary compulsory educational institutions. It is there that we deal with full population of youth, with egalitarian social structure. Shifting the point of gravity towards later stages of education-departure level in secondary schools or higher schools - is charged with an error resulting from deformation of social structure and homogenization of groups.

The concept of departure - taking initial momentum - is explained by R. Miller as "well-oriented to quality of life and possibly versatile development of personality"¹⁷. The situation of preschool children is varied. The fundamental role here is played by family functioning level and support rendered it by a variety of target-education institutions.

Is school prepared to level the differences noticeable at the departure point, attributable to social background factors and does it actually do so? The immediate answer may be obtained when social equality of education results are taken into consideration, especially of that level of education that is common and compulsory for all, and

¹⁷ R. Miller, Wyrównywanie startu szkolnego na wsi i w mieście. Raport z badań zbiorowych w latach 1975-1977, p. 6 (photocopied typescript), Gdańsk 1979.

also of autonomic institutions where the principle of program uniformity obliges to identical final achievements.

The common point for the four different formulas of perfect social equality discussed above is that they all concentrate on the search for equal (one) measure. Another possible line of penetration comprises equal (one) situation, Let us look at the issue of equal conditions of education. As early as the initial stage of socialization there appears conflict of roles: child-pupil-employee. Especially the last of the listed elements determines the ability to function within the two preceding roles, which is specifically true for children and youth of rural areas and peasant background. It is these type of families that children are burdened with physical productive work. This leads to low attendance during the beginning and final months of the school year due to accumulated farmwork, skipping homework and gaps in comprehension of program material, permanent setbacks (pupils repeating a class) and "school mortality" (dropouts, lack of leisure time, physical and stature defects).

Apart from time budget and physical exploitation of a young organism, such problems as conditions for individual learning at home, or effects of a mother working away from home are also analysed. All this is strictly connected with original environment family background. Other conditions of education go beyond that circle. One of them is the economic factor. One principle of our educational system is that education is free. However, we need not try to convince anyone that education costs. School expenses are financed both from social sources (mainly state budget) and individual (people's income).

Another equally important factor is the school network. The number of schools, their attractiveness, distance from home, boarding and rooming facilities all play an important role in helping young people decide and chose. Inhabitants of a large city enjoy a full range of choices, but as distance from education centers increases so do limitations (costs, waste of time, success expectancy, motivation strength).

All that is topped with treating education as a value. We live in a society that understands education in various ways. In the case of favorable social position (intelligentsia or city families) it is more effort-consuming to make the decision of short education or resignation from pursuing university education, while in the case of unfavorable condition (families of peasants, unskilled workers, rural areas) prolonged education of a child requires still stronger social reinforcement¹⁸.

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Social equality in education should be discussed both for its own sake (equality in educational reality - within school) and for its consequences in life (effects for functioning of individuals, social and professional groups, entire societies). It is also important to seek the relation between that value, on the one hand, and social justice, freedom or efficiency of the system on the other.

¹⁸ I elaborate on these motifs in a book being prepared for press: *Równość i sprawiedliwość społeczna. Studium na przykładzie oświaty.*